



Washington State Department of Agriculture *Hearing Notice*

For immediate release: April 21, 2003 (03-22)
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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, Washington 98504-2560

Hearings set in Wenatchee and Yakima for fruit and vegetable inspection fee increases

OLYMPIA — To better align inspection charges with costs, the state Department of Agriculture (WSDA) proposes to increase fees for inspecting fruits and vegetables. Officials also are seeking to adopt federal market inspection charges for performing audits for Good Agricultural Practices and Good Handling Practices. This work is conducted under the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Public hearings will be held at the following times and locations:

- **Wenatchee:** 1 p.m. April 23, Washington Apple Commission conference room, 2900 Euclid Ave.
- **Yakima:** 10 a.m. April 24, Department of Agriculture, Yakima Agriculture Center, 21 North First Ave.

The current hourly rate for inspecting fruits and vegetables is \$24.30 and \$33.02 for overtime hours. Proposed fees would be \$25.09 for regular hourly charges on June 30 and increase to \$25.89 on July 1, the beginning of Fiscal Year 2004. The overtime hourly charge of \$33.02 per hour would rise to \$34.10 on June 30 and \$35.19 on July 1. The proposed increases will be limited to fiscal growth factors allowed under Initiative 601 [3.29 percent for FY 2003 and 3.2 percent for FY 2004].

“Most inspection service users will see no increase or very little increase in fees because they are charged by the hundredweight and the proposal doesn’t affect hundredweight charges,” said Jim Quigley, program manager for the Fruit and Vegetable Inspection Program.

WSDA facilitates the sale of Washington fruits and vegetables by providing quality and condition inspections for the fresh produce and food processing industries. In addition, the service of auditing good handling practices and good agricultural practices is growing as major retailers see the benefits of certification in the marketplace.

Information on the proposal, including a [copy of the rules](http://agr.wa.gov/Inspection/FVInspection/Rule_Revision.htm), is on the WSDA Web site at

http://agr.wa.gov/Inspection/FVInspection/Rule_Revision.htm. Comments are due by 5 p.m.

April 25 and may be sent to Jim Quigley, program manager, Fruit and Vegetable Inspection Program, Commodity Inspection Division, Washington State Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, WA 98504-2560; by e-mail at jquigley@agr.wa.gov; or by phone (360) 902-1833.

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